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[CSADD: Raising Suicide Awareness, Prevention One Day At A Time](#)

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By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jacquelyn D. Childs



The nature of my job as a mass communication specialist allows me the opportunity to get involved in many different associations and activities around the command. One of the first events I had the chance to see when I arrived at Navy Medicine Education and Training Command (NMETC) on Joint Base San Antonio – Fort Sam Houston, Texas, was the staff and students at the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC) gathering in a field by the barracks to hold a ceremony and plant hundreds of small flags forming a ribbon to raise suicide awareness. CSADD had coordinated and hosted the event for anyone and everyone who wanted to participate not long after an airman at the school had taken their life.

This was my introduction to Navy Medicine Training Support Center's (NMTSC) CSADD chapter. Everywhere else I'd been in the Navy, CSADD stood for the "Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions." But at NMTSC they call themselves the "Coalition of Servicemembers Against Destructive Decisions" since they invite all staff and students in the joint training environment including Army and Air Force to get involved.



At an education command, CSADD members are well aware of the stress their target audience (the students) face in the fast-paced training environment. Pressures are coming at them from all sides as most of the service

members in the basic medical technician and corpsman program are brand new to the military. New to the military, new to the command, and participating in a stressful education program, these students are facing many factors which could influence suicidal tendencies. I believe being proactive in providing morale-building events and social activities while also raising awareness and teaching students to spot behaviors or tendencies ahead of time has helped the command keep serious incidents at a very low number.



SAN ANTONIO (Oct. 28, 2015) Seaman Apprentice Christopher Vongkhily, left, sings while Airman 1st Class Justin Garde plays the ukulele during a talent show at the Medical Education and Training Campus on Joint Base San Antonio – Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The talent show was planned and conducted by Sailors from Navy Medicine Training Support Center to raise awareness for suicide prevention. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jacquelyn D. Childs/Released)

I've had the opportunity to witness some of the events they hold to get students involved in nondestructive activities including talent shows, volunteer opportunities, lip sync battles, poetry readings, 5K runs, outings to parks or the USO, and even simple ice cream/root beer float socials or pancake breakfasts. I think it's a brilliant way to promote suicide awareness among the students as they get the chance to socialize, have fun, and feel as if someone cares about them. With hundreds of students at any given time, it could be easy for one single person to feel lost and insignificant.



Chief Hospital Corpsman Sara Stack, suicide prevention coordinator at Navy Medicine Training Support Center, speaks during a talent show. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jacquelyn D. Childs/Released)

Leadership attends many of these events as well as subject matter experts like the suicide prevention coordinator. Students are provided the opportunity to hear from them firsthand on important matters like suicide awareness. The suicide prevention coordinator has spoken to those in attendance at these events about spotting early signs, ways to handle stress in a healthy way, and who to talk to if you or someone else you know is contemplating suicide.

One thing I would be remiss not to mention is the awesome service of those who make these events possible. It still amazes me how passionate the leaders who are actively involved in CSADD are for what they do as they make every effort to provide students with fun and enlightening opportunities outside of the classroom. Most of those involved are instructors who work long hours and must volunteer their time after hours and hold meetings during their quick lunch breaks before returning to the podium.

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